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by

A. B. Isham

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NORTH AND SOUTH.

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North and South.

A Paper

READ BEFORE THE

OHIO COMMANDERY

—OF THE—

Military Order of the Loyal Legion

—OF THE—

UNITED STATES,

OCTOBER 5, 1887.

—BY—

A. B. ISHAM,

Late 1st Lieutenant Co. F, 7th Michigan Cavalry Volunteers, and for seven months a prisoner of war in Rebel prisons.

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Care of Prisoners of War, North and South.

From the immense armies called into the field, and the extended sphere of military operations during the great civil war, there necessarily accrued to the charge of each belligerent large contingents of prisoners of war. The Confederates who fell into the hands of the Union forces amounted, men and officers, to 476,169; whilst 188,145 Union men and officers were made prisoners of war by the Confederate troops. Not all, however, of these two enormous masses were held as captives of war. Of the Confederates, 248,599 were paroled on the field, leaving 227,570 who suffered confinement in prisons as prisoners of war. And one-half of the Federal prisoners, it is estimated, were paroled, leaving 94,072 who actually underwent confinement in the prisons of the South. The care of such large numbers, the safe keeping and proper maintenance, in regard to shelter, food, clothing, and hygienic environment—according to the laws of modern warfare, and as demanded by the civilization of the age, as well for prisoners of war as for those who may fall to the charge of the State under whatever circumstances—was a matter of no light moment. It involved the establishment of special bureaus, of camps and quarters, of an immense commissariat, of a considerable of an army for a guarding force; and employed an immense transportation equipment, a legion of contractors, special agents, and spies. In short, to make suitable provision for the sustentation, the well-being, and security of the captives, a burden was imposed but little inferior to supporting an active army of equal number in the field. How the obligations incumbent upon them toward the prisoners of war in their hands were discharged by the North

and the South is a part of the history of the struggle, which, while it may not be the most pleasant for consideration, in all its aspects, is not of secondary importance to any of the greatest affairs of the war.

TREATMENT OF PRISONERS AT THE NORTH.

At the North blind prejudice was rapidly fading away under the effulgent light diffused by the common school system, whose steady rays had about dispelled the ignorance and bigotry which had subjected helpless fellow-creatures, under popular disfavor, to the most brutal ferocity. No longer anywhere north of Mason and Dixon's line, by general sanction, could there have been a recurrence of such scenes as were witnessed at Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692, or in New York City in 1741. Universal education had not only confirmed the immortal declaration that "all men are created free and equal," but it had also inculcated the sentiment that all men had claims to care and regard, and that, while they lived, whatever may have been their derelictions, they were not to be deprived of any of the common necessaries or consolations of life with which it was possible to provide them. Animated by such feelings, the men of the North did not war against those of the South as against "hell-hounds," or "baboons," or "hellish brutes;" but as against misguided men, seeking to destroy the life of the Nation. The columns of blue, marching southward under the panoply of war, were terrible to behold; yet few hearts there were beneath the glorious colors they bore which could not be touched by human suffering, or moved by appeals of woe. In the shock of battle stern determination heeded not death, or wounds, or physical agony; but when the conflict of arms was over, no resentment was cherished to be expended upon defenceless captives which the fortunes of war had delivered over.

Prisoners captured by the Federals were not murdered, robbed, insulted, or subjected to harsh treatment. Isolated instances where rough usage was experienced very likely did

occur. But such treatment was rare, and was bestowed, generally, in retaliation for wrongs perpetrated by the rebels upon their comrades or upon Southern Unionists. After capture, instead of meeting with violence, abuse, and jeers, the rebel prisoners found their captors kindly disposed toward and interested in them. They generally bear testimony to the fact that rations were shared with them, and such generous offices of relief and assistance as were not inconsistent with their position as prisoners were freely rendered, where the need existed. When not to be immediately paroled or exchanged, the captives were sent to some of the large prison camps at the North which had been prepared for their accommodation. The largest of these were located at Indianapolis, Ind.; Columbus, Ohio; Chicago, Ill.; Elmira, N. Y.; Fort Delaware, Del.; St. Louis, Mo.; Finn's Point, Md.; Point Lookout, Md.; Rock Island, Ill.; Johnson's Island, Ohio; and Alton, Ill.

Many of the above camps had been in use as places of rendezvous for Union troops until they were in readiness to take the field. They were all selected with a special view to salubrity, and for the facilities they afforded to meet the wants of large bodies of men as regards water, fuel, and supplies. The quarters provided for the prisoners were precisely the same as for United States soldiers, and consisted, generally, of wooden barracks, arranged with bunks, well heated with stoves, and plentifully supplied with bedding of clean straw and blankets. To some extent tents had to be brought into requisition, but they were always fitted up with stoves for cold weather, and the Federal soldiers engaged in guard duty were quartered in all cases the same as the prisoners. Cook-houses, with full capacity and every convenience for preparing well cooked food, existed in every camp. The cooks were selected from among the prisoners themselves, so that if the cooking was not to their satisfaction, it was in their power to rectify it. The food was the same as supplied to United States soldiers, and was ample in every respect. The prisoners were arranged in divisions, with chiefs of their own, who

attended to the distribution of rations, allotting to each man his proper share. Hospital buildings were fitted up the same as for Union soldiers, and the dietary and service accorded the prisoners was every bit as good as to our own troops. It is the testimony of Miss Dix, whose great good deeds in the interests of afflicted humanity are everywhere known, that, in several hospitals for rebel prisoners which she visited, there was even a greater abundance of all that tends to comfort and sustain the sick than in the hospitals for Union soldiers. Not only the sick, but also the prisoners generally, were permitted to receive food and clothing from friends and sympathizers. All money in possession of prisoners, or sent them by their friends, was, in order to prevent bribery of guards and escape, taken charge of by the prison authorities. It was placed to their credit, and could be drawn upon to purchase anything in the sutlers' stocks. The prisoners received the full benefit of it. Any surplus was turned over to them at the exchange, or in case of death it was transferred to the hospital fund for sick prisoners. They were supplied with newspapers, periodicals, and books, by private individuals and charitable organizations at the North, and in a number of prisons they had the advantage of circulating libraries secured to them through the efforts of the prison officials. Vegetables, fruits, and delicacies were sent in by outside parties in no unstinted measure; indeed, they were ofttimes so liberally ministered unto as to cause serious discontent among the guards, who were neglected, and confined to the army rations. Clothing of all kinds required by a soldier was issued in accordance as a need for it was manifested, and the rebels, while prisoners of war, were better and more comfortably clad than while serving the Confederacy in the field. Facilities for the observance of personal cleanliness were within the reach of all. The consolations of religion were not denied them. Chaplains were appointed to every camp; and ministers, and all who went in the name of religion, were given ready access at all appropriate times. No restrictions were put upon the prisoners as to speech or action, so that they were not disorderly, and did

not crowd together in certain portions of the camp so as to excite apprehensions of an organized attempt at escape. The drainage of all camps was well looked after, the grounds were kept thoroughly policed, and accumulations of dirt and offal were removed daily. On admission to the hospital, patients underwent a thorough ablution, were arrayed in clean garments, and placed in comfortable beds, while their cast-off clothing was thoroughly renovated and held in waiting for their recovery. In case of death, the body was interred in a decent, plain wooden coffin, and buried in a grave numbered and marked with the name of the deceased. So carefully were the interments made, that, out of 30,716 Confederates who died in Northern prisons, only 726 sleep in unknown graves—the most of these at Alton, Ill., where, from some unknown cause, 662 graves bear no marks by which they can be identified.

Notwithstanding the generous treatment they received, it is not surprising that the Confederate prisoners did not regard their confinement at the North as the most blissful period of their lives. Although they had a sufficiency of space, shelter, food, and clothing, with everything held requisite to meet the ordinary demands of existence, yet they were deprived of liberty, under the strictest military supervision, annoyed by daily roll-calls and inspections; wearied by the same unvarying daily routine and associations, depressed by unfavorable intelligence, or none at all, and heart-sick from long disappointed hopes. It is not at all improbable that many suffered from extremes of cold or heat. There were few soldiers of the Union, in field or quarters, who did not likewise experience discomfort when the mercury was carried to either extremity of the thermometric scale. There was some danger, too, of being shot by guards. While but a very small percentage were shot, and the guards did not indulge in reckless or unwarrantable shooting, there were prisoners who would sometimes make a bold break for liberty, and those who disregarded the repeated orders of the guards, thus drawing upon themselves the fire of their guns. In some of these

instances bullets flew wide of the mark, and prisoners who were in no wise concerned in such breaches of prison rules were wounded or killed. Disease was also present within the prison walls, for the most part brought in by the prisoners themselves. They bore about with them small-pox, malarial disorders, diarrhœa, dysentery, consumption, and fevers. The ratio of disease, however, constantly decreased with the length of stay in prison, but the grim reaper garnered a rich harvest in the place where his coming is most unwelcome, although he sets the prisoner free.

The average mortality among all the rebel prisoners at the North was 13⅓ per cent., or 7½ out of each hundred. The highest death rate was at Elmira, N. Y., 2,980 dying out of 12,147 confined there—a mortality of 25 per cent., or 25 out of each hundred. No other Northern prison approached anywhere near to it. Even this very large mortality was less than one-half of the average mortality of Union prisoners in the South, which was 53 per cent., or 53 out of each hundred. The greatest mortality among the rebel prisoners, with the solitary exception of those at Elmira, occurred during the first months of confinement, the health constantly improving, notwithstanding the prevalence of small-pox, after the first few months; in this respect differing from the rebel prisons, where the mortuary rate increased with duration of confinement.

Undoubtedly hardships were experienced through inadequate hospital accommodations at the period of greatest mortality at Elmira and some other points, affording some basis of fact for the condemnation which writers on the Southern side have bestowed upon prison management at the North. But that there was culpable neglect or inhuman treatment of inmates is not borne out by the statements of prisoners entitled to credit. The same complaints find expression everywhere in regard to municipal hospitals and public institutions in times of great and unexpected increase of the sick list. The reports of starvation, cruel treatment, and brutal punishments published through the Southern press

are mere fabrications, invented to offset the true statements of Union soldiers concerning the horrible prison hells of the Confederacy. There are scores of former soldiers, now residents of Cincinnati and surrounding country, who, during their term of service, were assigned to guard duty over rebel prisoners of war at prisons both East and West. What has been here stated in reference to the conduct of these prisons they corroborate in every particular. These men as citizens, in social and business life, stand upon so high a plane as to admit of no questioning the positive statements they make concerning the prison management of which they have personal knowledge. Less numerous, perhaps, but not less reliable, are those in this community who were formerly prisoners of war at the South. They affirm that the returned rebel prisoners they had the opportunity to meet at the South during and at the close of the war, made willing acknowledgment of the very best treatment in every respect of Confederates while they were held captive at the North. Not only this, but with their better feelings touched by the objects of pity all about them, they confessed their shame and humiliation that human beings should have been brought to such a pass upon Southern soil as the Union prisoners there paroled, or awaiting parole.

In only two instances were measures of retaliation put in operation against any considerable number of rebel prisoners for all the terrible inflictions visited upon the Union prisoners by the Confederate authorities. One of these cases was where General Butler placed Confederates in the works at Dutch Gap, to check the forced employment of Unionists upon the rebel fortifications around Richmond. The other was at Charleston, when United States officers, prisoners of war, were placed under fire by the rebels, General John G. Foster exposed an equal number of rebel officers on Morris Island to the fire of the rebel guns. In both these instances the desired result was accomplished. The Confederates stopped their objectionable proceedings. It is true, that in November, 1863, Secretary Stanton ordered the United States Commissioner of

Exchange "to subject the rebel prisoners in our hands to treatment similar to that which our men receive in rebel prisons." The Commissioner replied that human nature would not submit to such treatment under an ordinary system of guards, and the order was never executed. Union soldiers and officers could not have been found so destitute of all the common attributes of humanity as was requisite for such work.

TREATMENT OF PRISONERS AT THE SOUTH.

In a Confederacy founded upon servile labor, the leaders held all labor as degrading, and the worker as but little superior to a brute. They affected to hold in contempt the population of the North, which allowed to every individual the greatest freedom of action consistent with the general good, held honest toil in the highest respect, recognized the universal brotherhood of man, and were unequalled in intelligence and industry upon the face of the globe. The free people of the North were denominated "mudsills," "hirelings," "serfs," "boors," "cattle," declared groveling by nature, brutal through instinct, hellish in propensity, and possessed of peculiar organs of bodily development belonging only to the brute creation. This sort of stuff filled the Southern prints, and was proclaimed from the rostrum and pulpit, until quite a large portion of the population of the South, honest enough, but uninformed, and accustomed to implicit reliance upon their leaders, actually believed that they were in political alliance with a species of ogres. President Lincoln was pictured as a hideous ape, and Vice-President Hamlin as a thick-lipped, woolly-headed "nigger." When the General Government, after the ordinance of secession had been passed, and an overt act of war committed by the seizure of United States property, prepared to re-establish its authority, the chiefs of rebellion, while manifesting a pacific disposition in the expression of a desire to be let alone, were nevertheless active in inflaming their people to a white heat of passion. It was announced that their soil was about to be invaded by

"vandals," "spoilers," "ravishers," "fiends," who were to be "welcomed with bloody hands to hospitable graves," but accorded no rights of belligerents. Long tyranny over a slave population had so brutalized their natures, that not a few of the public men and journals of the South boldly advocated the policy of hoisting the black flag—that is, showing no mercy to prisoners, but killing all whom fate might deliver over to them—wounded, or sick, or well. The infamous treatment which unfortunates of war in the South subsequently experienced is fully foreshadowed in the utterances of politicians, press, and pulpit, and in letters to Jefferson Davis and members of his cabinet, now among the captured rebel archives at Washington.

As the legitimate outcome of the feeling engendered, as above outlined, when Union prisoners were taken they were most generally threatened, insulted, or violently dealt with. First, upon the battle-field, they were beaten, shot, or bayonetted, made the recipients of the most vile and blasphemous epithets, and robbed of personal property, jewelry, money, pocket articles, mess utensils, blankets, overcoats, hats, coats, pants or boots; in not a few instances stripped nearly naked. The journey to a receiving prison not rarely occupied from several days to a week. The guarding force was usually cavalry. The prisoners were hurried along by their mounted escort; the sick and wounded spurred along with the rest; and when the physical strength was spent beyond resuscitation by any kind of goading, so that they fell out of the line unable to keep up, they were shot, cut down by sabres, or brained by clubbed muskets, and left for dead by the wayside. Sometimes a rope was tied around the body of a disabled captive, the free end made fast to the saddle of a guard, and thus the life dragged out of the poor victim. Very little food, if any, was supplied upon such marches. Rebel troops encountered upon the journey still further despoiled and abused the prisoners. Where railroad transportation was included in the route, box cars, in which cattle had been transported, were provided. Very often the cars were in the same condition

in which the cattle had left them. Into such conveyances the prisoners were packed so thickly that, stow themselves as snugly as they could, there was not seating room upon the floor for all. The doors were only left open about two feet, which space was obstructed by guards, excluding air and light. The prisoners were kept back from the openings, so that they were reduced to the level of animals going to the shambles, except that the latter were not so closely packed that they could not lie down, and have some little freedom of movement. The sufferings of such a passage may be imagined ; they may not be here described.

Upon arrival at the receiving prison they were drawn up in line to be searched. Here money, jewelry, and articles of use which had escaped the observation or desires of the captors were taken from them. Where it was suspected the clothing contained articles of value concealed, they were stripped naked, the lining and seams of the clothing ripped out, and, in this condition, it was tossed back to the owners to be put in shape for use again as best they might. Nothing was ever returned, nor was anything given to take the place of knives, forks, spoons, plates, cups, clothing, or blankets, of which they had been despoiled. Protests were responded to by blows and even by shooting to the death. The search over, installment in prison quarters followed.

The prisons at Richmond and Danville, up to the spring of 1864, held the great bulk of prisoners in the Confederacy. The prisons of Richmond, with the exception of Belle Isle, were old tobacco warehouses, all three stories in height with an attic ; and they differed only in size, Libby Prison being the largest. In 1863 they were all crowded to their full capacity. An account of Smith Prison will serve for Pemberton, Scott, Castle Thunder, and the rest. Each floor of Smith Prison had an area of 2,400 square feet, and it was so packed with prisoners that they had only four square feet each, just sufficient for standing room. There were no stools, benches, or bunks upon which to rest themselves—nothing but the bare floor and walls. In order to be able to lie down, rows

had to be formed lengthwise across the room, and, the first row lying down upon their sides, the second row followed, interlocking legs with the first, and so with the other rows until the floor was everywhere covered with a compact mass of humanity. The space did not permit lying upon the back. After being thus welded in, it was impossible for an individual to turn over without the whole two rows did likewise. Water was furnished in pipes to each floor, and faucets and sinks were located at one end of the rooms in each story. There were no receptacles for water beyond a wooden tub at the faucet, which economical provision, together with the close packing of the prisoners, rendered general bathing and washing of clothes an impossibility. From overflow at the sinks, and spilling of water by jostling as it was carried in cups to sick or disabled men in various parts of the room, the floor was kept constantly wet, so that the captives were ever present in a cold, foul, moisture-saturated atmosphere. No approach was permitted to the windows; for if the guard below caught sight of a prisoner, he was immediately shot. No stoves or any means of warming were furnished for cold weather, and to keep warm the guests of Confederate prisons must tramp around and slap themselves day and night. Death was busy among them, and would soon have made sufficient floor space, had not fresh prisoners been continually added. "Lice were in all their quarters." The prisoner who would keep himself measureably clear of these pests had his hands never idle.

The rations at Richmond and Danville were issued cooked. They were essentially the same at all the prisons in the Confederacy—with the exception of Savannah, where sufficient food of good quality was furnished—and consisted of eight ounces of bread and two ounces of yellow, maggoty bacon, or, in place of the bacon, a proportionate amount of fresh beef. The bread was generally corn bread, made from meal ground corn and cob together, simply mixed with salt and water and baked hard. Sometimes a thin decoction called soup was served, made up of water, and long worms, bugs, and brown beans in about equal proportions. Occasionally, too, a

tablespoonful of rice per man added luxury to the fare. If any escapes had been made, or a board of the prison floor ripped up, the rations were withheld for a day or two, nor was the deficit ever made good. Upon such diet the weight and strength rapidly declined. As the body became thinner the angularities and protuberances of the bony skeleton grew into prominence. This interfered with rest on account of the difficulty of comfortably adapting the many inequalities of a lean human body to the plane of a hard, level floor. An almost continual shifting of position told that it was impossible to equalize the pressure long in any situation suitable to wholesome slumber. Soreness and aching took hold on the more salient osseous projections all over the frame. Sleep only seemed to add more cruel pangs to the hunger which consumed whilst awake. The sleeper always dreamed of excursions in quest of food, or of gorgeous banquets, at which he never failed to become surfeited. Awakening, with the vision of abundance before him, the cravings of starving tissues gnawed with tenfold intensity. It was impossible to keep still; there was an aimless walking up and down, searching with the eyes every inch of the walls, ceilings, and floor, although it was perfectly apparent that plain brick walls and floors, and open, unplastered joists which had been thoroughly explored numberless times before, could not change their appearance; could show no hiding place or secret passage; could afford no succor, comfort, or any hope of escape.

Belle Isle was an island in the James River opposite Richmond, just above the Danville Railroad bridge. The upper part was high ground covered with trees, but the lower portion was a sand flat, unprotected from the scorching sun of summer or the cutting winds of winter. This barren spot was surrounded by a deep, wide ditch, and earth works, and an average number of five thousand prisoners were there confined. Some old rotten Sibley tents were given for shelter, but with the utmost crowding they were not sufficient for one-half the prisoners. No stoves being provided, the inmates built chimneys of mud, which, however, afforded them little

comfort, since the wood issued per day was not sufficient to last more than an hour and a half with the most careful use. In the severe winter of 1863–4, when the river was frozen over and the ground often covered with snow, the starving captives upon this bleak sand waste were in terrible straits. The great majority were without shoes, stockings, or shirts. Many, too, were without coats or pants, and the clothing possessed by the most fortunate among them was simply tattered rags. To husband the warmth of their famishing bodies they dug pits in the damp sand, and lay piled upon one another in them like hogs, the outside layers changing to the inside when they could no longer withstand the cold. Every night there were a number who ceased to change places, and morning found them cold in death. The living, to cover their own necessities, took the clothing from the bodies no longer in need of it, and everything went on as usual. Though water flowed all around them, they were denied its free use. Only six were allowed to pass to the river at a time during the day, and none at all at night. In consequence, to procure a sufficiency of this vital fluid, they had to dig holes in the camp, which filled up with water ; and, although foul from camp pollutions, inexorable necessity forced its use. In the full view of Richmond, under the eye of Jefferson Davis himself, these men died off like plague-stricken sheep. Food and clothing sent them by the United States Government, and by relatives at the North, they derived little benefit from, since nine-tenths was appropriated by the rebels. The only advantage which the sick had over the others on Belle Isle was in the thin layer of straw which covered the ground under the hospital tents..

At Danville the prisoners were quartered in old tobacco warehouses—packed together as at Richmond. Their condition was even more deplorable at Danville, since they had to procure their water supply from the Dan River, some distance removed, carrying it in buckets. Hence they suffered greatly from thirst, besides being wholly unable to obtain enough for washing purposes. From insufficiency of sink

accommodations they were obliged to live and sleep in their own filth. It may be said of the prison hospitals at Richmond and Danville, that, by comparison with other such places in the Confederacy, they were entitled to be considered luxurious sick quarters. Not that any delights were ever experienced by the sick there which the memory would fondly linger over, but they were provided with bunks and beds, enough straw, old blankets, and quilts to afford them warmth, together with enough wheat bread, and soup hash, made up of meat and potatoes, to support life in a well man, however much unsuited such a diet might be to the wants of the sick.

Time does not permit more than a passing reference to Salisbury, N. C., a Golgotha where 12,121 soldiers of the Union perished, as at Belle Isle, from starvation and exposure, a mortality of fifty per cent., or one death out of every two prisoners confined there. The record of horrors which Salisbury discloses is scarcely less appalling than is furnished by the prison stockade at Andersonville, Ga., which enclosed within its portals more of human misery, more of human endurance, devotion, patriotism, and heroism than was ever exhibited upon any other equal area of surface upon earth.

In December, 1863, while erecting the stockade at Andersonville, Captain W. S. Winder said that he was "going to build a pen that would kill more damned Yankees than could be destroyed at the front." The original enclosure included about fifteen acres, which was enlarged to twenty-five acres in August, 1864. The only internal improvements the rebels had arranged for the reception of the prisoners were a dead line, and some old tents for hospital purposes in one corner of the pen. All else was in a state of nature, except that the trees had been cut away. The first few thousand prisoners from Belle Isle, installed in March, 1864, were allowed, under guard, to bring in wood from the forest, with which they constructed rude hovels like primitive pig pens, but capable of shielding them from the weather. No such privilege, however, was extended to those subsequently turned in, a large percentage of whom were old prisoners from Richmond and

Danville. Thrown thus upon their own resources, some dug burrows in the ground, some piled up circular banks of earth which they covered over with blankets, coats, or shirts, and crawled beneath ; others moulded clay into the shape of bricks, dried them in the sun, and, by inclosing the walls together, made adobes of beehive form, into which they could creep ; while many, too weak or disheartened to resort to such shifts for shelter, remained wholly unprotected from sun, and dews, and storms.

A swamp about four hundred feet in width occupied the center of the pen, through the middle of which coursed a brook four feet wide by two feet deep. This stream furnished the water supply for the prisoners for all purposes. The rebel camps were located on it just about where it passed into the stockade, and, as all their camp waste was discharged directly into it, the water was already polluted when it entered the prison enclosure. From the edge of the swamp, upon either side, the ground rose very considerably, carrying all the drainage to the swamp and stream. The stream thus became an open sewer, and the vile sewerage flowing through it, the fluid with which 31,000 men must slake their thirst and use in place of pure water for all cleansing offices. If a prisoner reached under the dead line to obtain a purer drink than could be obtained inside of it, he was at once shot by the guard, ever on the watch for the shadow of a pretext to do a murderous deed. It is true that some of the prisoners dug wells, from which they obtained water of fair quality ; but for the general mass there was no other alternative than to employ the disgusting compound of the brook, until the latter part of August, 1864, when a never-failing spring of crystal water burst forth in the stockade, and it was hailed as a direct gift from God. After heavy rains the whole marsh overflowed, forming a lake of excrementitious matter. The evaporations from this gave rise to nauseous, noxious vapors, which were a source of annoyance to even citizens for miles around. The subsidence of the waters left the surface of the morass covered over with a mass of reeking filth, quivering with the move-

ments of the lowest forms of insect life. At night pestilential fogs arose from the bog, filling the whole enclosure with a saturating, sickening, oppressive mist. Men enfeebled through starvation and disease, in crawling to the stream for water, became mired in the horrible ooze of the swamp, and thus yielded up the ghost.

The dead and dying were everywhere. In the holes which they had dug, to be revealed only by the odors of decomposition ; half buried in the terrible grime of the swamp ; while all over the stockade, exposed to the scorching rays of the noonday sun, in all their ghastly hideousness, were skeleton forms whose light had flickered out for want of fuel to feed it. The dead, bare of clothing, were piled like cordwood into army wagons, hauled out to the cemetery, thrown side by side into a long ditch, and a layer of dirt shoveled over them. The same wagons, uncleansed, containing putrid remnants of their former freight, brought in the rations to the living. Great swarms of flies hovered about them, and announced their coming by a hum which filled the air, and muffled all other sounds. To one-half the camp the rations were issued cooked, and to one-half uncooked, alternating with each issue. The wood furnished was pitch pine, but not more than one-eighth of what was requisite for the proper cooking of the food. When ignited, it gave off a dense oily smoke, which begrimed the prisoners like soot, and which, for lack of soap, they were unable to remove. The whole skin became blackened, the Saxon features and straight hair forming the only points of distinction from the negro. Deprived of cooking utensils, pieces of tin, bits of chips, and stones were the only available substitutes for pots and kettles. From the crumbling of the meal, however, but one side could be heated with such miserable appliances, so that, at best, the ration was not more than half cooked, and thus had to be eaten. Many were destitute of even a chip or a stone, and were forced to ingest their food raw. With famine pressing ever harder and harder, numbers of men lost all moral sense, and thought only of self-preservation. They openly robbed weaker men of rations or

possessions, and murdered stronger ones while they slept in order to obtain anything, of even the slightest value, they might have upon their persons. Words fail to paint the horrors of the place. The very soil seemed to crawl from the swarms of vermin upon it. Here and thére throughout the squalid skeleton throng were the subjects of diarrhœa and dysentery in process of dissolution. Wallowing in their own refuse, the vermin crawling and rioting upon their flesh, tumbling into eyes, ears, and open mouths, while maggots fed beneath the skin where scurvy sores had broken open. The ravages of gangrene were to be seen upon every hand, the flesh eaten from the limbs, exposing ligaments and bones, and the great worms revelling in the putrid flesh. Scurvy had fixed its seal upon nearly every prison inmate, and most horrible are its aspects in its extreme stages. Those nearly naked shapes of men, with glassy, sunken eyes, hollow cheeks, parchment skin, and with bones projecting bare of tissue through scurvy-destroyed structures, conveyed to the mind the idea of life after death, as though they had been resurrected after long burial, and had the breath of life infused. Here, too, groped blind men whom scurvy or gangrene had robbed of sight, begging most piteously for food--food, the want of which was graven on every lineament of the whole mass, whose intense yearning, although it broke not forth in articulate accents, was none the less powerful and plaintive. Gaping idiots, with their lusterless orbs fixed upon vacancy, wandered aimlessly around, until their undirected steps crossed the dead line, when the fatal bullet sped them to their rest. Reason had fled--small wonder—from those poor wretches, who tore their rags, gnashed their teeth, howled and muttered, and cursed, and precipitated themselves upon their fate as they made an insane rush for the stockade. The tents, which it were a mockery to call hospitals, presented a spectacle of monumental wretchedness without parallel in ancient or modern history. Three thousand men were lying there upon the bare ground, uncovered by anything except the filthiest rags, which were saturated with purulent matter and

green with mould. They had been placed there to die. As they rotted away, tortured with intense pain, the dead flesh dropping from their bones upon the sand, with swarms of flies and vermin preying upon them, and hideous worms, too greedy to wait till life was extinct, tumbling, and revelling, and rioting in the putrid mass, all that escaped their lips was the low, moaning. pleading cry for food.

Thus these martyrs for the Union died and were buried, like pest-stricken animals, without benefit of clergy. The Protestant clergy of the South generally passed by on the other side. There were, of course, individual instances of generous conduct; but no class in the South was more bitter it its hatred, more devoid of charity toward Northern soldiers, than the Southern clergy. They were swift to furnish certificates of immaculate Christian character to the fiends who starved and tortured thousands of Federal prisoners, but few acts of mercy toward the sufferers has the recording angel credited to their account. In marked contrast was the conduct of the Catholic clergy at Andersonville and elsewhere. Only hearts into which had been poured the fullness of divine love were endowed with the courage and grace to be God's messengers in those fearful prison hells. Such divine seal bore the Sisters of Charity at Charleston, and the Rev. Wm. J. Hamilton and other priests at Andersonville. Crawling into the burrows, swarming with insect pests and reeking with corruption, these devoted men administered the last consolations of their church to the skeleton creatures with the agony of death upon them. Not only spiritually minded were they, but they were also practical Samaritans. Turnips, potatoes, onions, radishes, were secreted in their clothing, which they furtively slipped into the hand of one and another scurvy-ravished wretch, so as not to attract the attention of the guard.

The brutal punishments, the shameful indignities, the systematic, studied efforts to destroy the loyalty and wholly crush the spirits of these men, must be passed over without comment. It is sufficient to say that no equal body of men in such woeful straits could have been more faithful, patient,

undismayed, and uncomplaining. With flaming posters upon the stockade, and recruiting agents every day mounted upon the parapet, offering abundant food, clothing, and pay to all who would accept service under the Confederacy, only 580 of the famished, pestilence-smitten multitude at Andersonville were seduced from their allegiance to the stars and stripes. Out of the whole number of pitiably distressed prisoners in the Confederacy, only about 3,000 held their lives more sacred than their soldierly honor, and enlisted in the rebel army. Most of these, however, were soon returned back to their prison quarters, since they were ever seeking opportunities to get within the Union lines.

Rebel prison treatment occasioned the death of 50,000 Federal soldiers. Some of these deaths must naturally have occurred, and allowing for these 13⅓ per cent. (the average mortality of rebel prisoners at the North), the mortality should have been 12,592 for the 94,072 Union prisoners, leaving 37,508 who were the direct victims of starvation, overcrowding, and exposure. Of the whole who died, 43,000 repose in Southern soil, and 7,000 died during transportation North, or in hospitals shortly after arrival. The total number killed upon the Union side in all the engagements of the war was 44,238, or 5,762 less than were destroyed in rebel prisons! The average deaths for all the rebel prisons is thus 53 per cent., or 53 deaths out of every 100 prisoners. Nearly one-half of this mortality is due to Andersonville. While the interments at that place number but 13,705, yet the prisoners confined there were distributed to Florence, Charleston, Millen, Blackshear, Eufaula, Cahawba, Savannah, and other places; so that the mortality at these prison stations, as pertaining to old prisoners at Andersonville, may properly be added. 40,611 Union soldiers passed through the portals of that infamous pen, of which number 23,000 perished, a mortality of 59 per cent., or 59 out of each 100. Of 94,072 Union prisoners held by the rebels, 50,000 died. Of 227,570 Confederate prisoners held by the United States, 30,152 died. To have attained a mortality rate in the Northern prisons equal to that in the

Southern prisons there should have been 120,602 deaths out of the 227,570 Confederate prisoners, instead of 30,152.

The people of the South, generally, may be absolved from willing complicity in the heinous system of treatment, which, through the most cruel torments, deprived 50,000 men of life, and made physical wrecks of thousands more. Citizens in the vicinity of all prisons sought to alleviate the condition of the inmates, but they were roughly repulsed by the authorities. Letters protesting against the atrocious prison management, as a crime appealing to God, were sent to Jefferson Davis by citizens and guards, and he was urged to set the prisoners free if it was not possible to give them what they were entitled to as human beings. To the members of the rebel congress, and governors of states, who remonstrated with him concerning the treatment of prisoners, he justified it solely on the ground of "policy." In carrying out this infamous policy he found a fit agent in his particular friend, General John H. Winder. Early in 1864, when Winder left Richmond to assume charge at Andersonville, the Richmond *Examiner* thus editorially hailed his departure: "Thank God that Richmond is at last rid of old Winder. God have mercy upon those to whom he has been sent." In a report upon Andersonville, August 5, 1864, Colonel D. T. Chandler, of the Confederate Inspector-General's office, after characterizing the prison as "a disgrace to civilization," with horrors surpassing description, advises the removal of General Winder as one wholly devoid of feelings of humanity, who "deliberately, and in cold blood," advocated leaving the prisoners in their overcrowded condition until death had so thinned them as to give sufficient space. Jeff. Davis responded by promoting Winder to the control of all prisoners east of the Mississippi. When the fiendish creature Wirz was brought to trial for his crimes, Jefferson Davis, then in Fortress Monroe, and James A. Seddon, in Fort Lafayette, with visons of the halter before them, had no more to say about "policy," but pleaded a state of famine throughout the South in extenuation for the starvation of prisoners. They summoned to their relief that master

of deception and trickery, Robert Ould, whose keener mental acumen saw that a defense could not be rested upon a poverty of supplies alone, in the light of letters from the South—among the captured archives—begging them to set the prisoners free, and he boldly proceeded to shift the responsibility for the destruction of Union prisoners upon the United States Government by the preposterous claim that he had offered to turn over these prisoners, without equivalent, to the Federal Commissioner of Exchange, who had neglected to provide transportation, according to his agreement. This was unequivocably denied by the Commissioner, and Ould, while acknowledging that his proposition was not written, only verbal, sought to substantiate it by statements from one and another in the South—among others, General Lee—that he (Ould) had told them, some time previously, that he had made such a proposal. This invention of Ould's, at that time to create a diversion in favor of the guilty heads of the rebellion and save their necks, accomplished its purpose; and rebel apologists ever since have put it forward as an established fact. Even as late as 1876 General Imboden, and another genius, "to fortune and to fame unknown," have had the cool effrontery to affirm, that, to their positive knowledge, large bodies of prisoners were sent to posts within the Union lines to be turned over upon a receipt from the post commander, which, being refused, no alternative remained but to return the prisoners again to their pens. No such thing ever happened. Had it been so, with a desire to be relieved of these prisoners, they would have turned them loose to take care of themselves, upon their individual paroles. The dire responsibility for the starving of prisoners is not to be shirked by any sort of fabrication, however ingenious. It is no matter what caused the cessation of exchange, it is no matter if *all* overtures for exchange were refused by the Federal Government, provided the Confederacy possessed the ability to feed the prisoners in its hands. That supplies were withheld, which could have been readily furnished, appears from the following facts:

1. It is the testimony of rebel surgeons at prison camps, and of Catholic priests who visited them, that they were not permitted to carry in articles of food to the prisoners. Also of rebel citizens that they were not allowed to minister to their necessities, although they made attempts to do so.

2. A plentiful food supply was offered to all who would enter the Confederate service, and it was given to those who did.

3. The great bulk of the supplies sent by the United States Government and citizens was appropriated by the Confederate authorities, and but little reached the prisoners themselves.

4. An abundant ration, of good quality, was issued to prisoners at Savannah at the very time it was claimed there was nothing to give the prisoners at Andersonville.

5. There was no wholesale starvation of citizens or negroes.

6. General Sherman subsisted his army upon the country in the neighborhood of the rebel prisons, and found supplies in profusion.

One feature of the exchange question may be alluded to, since it has been urged that the rebel authorities would not wish to destroy their prisoners, as in that event they must rob themselves of their own soldiers, prisoners at the North, for whom they would have no exchange equivalent. It was always insisted upon by the Confederate commissioner of exchange, when the balance of prisoners was against them, as a basis of a general exchange, that all surplus prisoners should be turned over, under parole. Thus, to whatever verge they might reduce Union prisoners, in any agreement for a general exchange they were always sure of receiving back all their own.

However harrowing the sufferings and death of the true soldiers of the Republic in Southern prisons, they lived and died not in vain. They kept back from the lines confronting Grant and Sherman nearly three to one of their numbers of able-bodied veteran rebel soldiers. According to General Grant, the very salvation of the country depended upon them; for, if the host they held at bay was added to the hostile ranks,

as it would have been in case of a general exchange, regardless of the obligations of parole, repeatedly violated before when the urgency was not so great, the armies of Grant and Sherman might have been overwhelmed, and a Southern Confederacy established. And there is left as a rich legacy for all time, the sublime heroism they displayed in their unswerving devotion to the flag they loved, under whatever inflictions or temptations, and the declaration, sealed with their lives, that they were content to rot and die if the interests of their country demanded it.

Upon Jefferson Davis and his advisers rests the fearful weight of responsibility for the ruthless sacrifice of these men. Winder, Seddon, and Wirz have gone to their account. Jeff. Davis still lives, a phenomenal monument to the mercy of a benignant government and a long suffering Providence. He chews the cud of bitter disappointment, a thousand-fold intensified by the unscrupulous efforts he put forth to achieve success. A burden to the South, over which he exercised an absolute dictatorship, with the design of perpetuating it in name as well as in fact, whose people he impoverished and whose best blood he wasted, grown garrulous and more rancorous with age, he stands upon the brink of eternity. With the light fading out from the twilight, with what apprehensions must he turn his vision toward the great unknown; what forms of starving, tortured victims must beckon to him from out the impenetrable shades.

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